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## **NDEP Press Release**

March 11, 2004

### **NDEP Schedules Public Meeting to Discuss Ground Water Contamination at the Yerington Mine Site in Yerington, Nevada**

The Nevada Division of Environmental Protection (NDEP) will host a public meeting on Wednesday, March 24, 2004 at the Casino West Convention Center, 11 North Main Street, Yerington, NV, at 7:00 pm to discuss information about recent well sampling for Uranium near the Yerington Mine Site along with the potential health effects of Uranium. A poster session will run from 6:00 to 7:00 pm.

Additionally, a short history of naturally occurring Uranium in the Yerington area and Western United States will be presented. Representatives from the NDEP, the Nevada State Health Division, the Federal EPA, the BLM and other experts, will be present to answer and discuss any questions or concerns regarding health issues or other issues associated with the Yerington mine cleanup.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

Last December, the Atlantic Richfield Company sampled several monitoring and drinking water wells in the vicinity of the Yerington Mine Site in Lyon County, Nevada. The sampling and analysis was conducted to help determine if drinking water in area homes had been impacted by mining activities. The lab analysis included tests for Uranium. Sampling was conducted on 27 domestic wells and Uranium was identified in eight of those wells at concentration levels that exceed state and federal drinking water standards.

Uranium is naturally occurring in the western United States, including the Yerington area, and the source of the Uranium in the wells is currently under further assessment. Based on limited analysis to date, officials from NDEP believe the potential for migration

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of Uranium from the mine is similar to other metals of concern. Moreover, NDEP officials recognize that Uranium concentrations in drinking water wells in the vicinity of the mine are likely the result of naturally occurring materials in the area. However, further groundwater assessment is necessary to determine potential impacts due to mining and to establish background concentrations.

The Anaconda Mining Company, predecessor of the Atlantic Richfield Company, began mining activities at the Yerington Mine Site in the early 1950's and from 1953 to 1965, operations at the facility consisted of mining the Yerington Pit for copper oxide.

Miscellaneous mining and processing continued around the site from 1978 to 1989 at which time Arimetco, Inc. began a copper recovery operation, which lasted through November 1999. Arimetco abandoned the Yerington Mine site in January 2000, leaving five-leach pads with leach solution still in the system. Since January 2000, NDEP has managed the mine site to ensure that leach solutions were appropriately contained. Recent information regarding the concentration of naturally occurring Uranium by way of the copper mining processes has led to the current assessment of Uranium concentrations in the groundwater.

In order to address concerns regarding Uranium in local groundwater, NDEP has initiated an action plan that requires Atlantic Richfield to further sample local drinking water wells. Sampling results will be used to develop a better understanding of current conditions in local wells. NDEP officials have also requested assistance from EPA to develop preliminary groundwater contaminant transport calculations to better understand the potential movement of Uranium in the groundwater from the mine property.

As a precautionary measure, bottled water is being provided by Atlantic Richfield Company to all households where Uranium concentrations in wells now exceed 25 micro grams per liter (ug/L). In addition, domestic wells in the area were retested during the week of March 8, 2004. This will provide an additional assessment of Uranium in area groundwater and assist in providing additional understanding of movement in terms of horizontal and vertical delineation of Uranium. Atlantic Richfield Company has agreed to sample all wells (where owners will grant access), as well as to research each well's construction, screened interval and water depth.

NDEP has released results of well tests to each resident who participated in a recent sampling event along with information on Uranium and its potential health effects. NDEP officials are also working with the Nevada State Health Division and EPA to interpret potential toxicology and health effect limits associated with Uranium.

For more information visit NDEP's web page or contact Jim Najima, Chief, Bureau of Corrective Actions, Nevada Division of Environmental Protection at 775-687-9484. <http://ndep.nv.gov/yerington/minesite.htm>